



Local News

January 5, 2009

Volume 2, No. 1

Summit begins new year of local foods education and networking

There's only one week before the first Local Foods summit planned for Tuesday, Jan. 13 at the Bismarck Civic Center.

In addition to some renowned out-of-state guests speaking on various topics including "Buy Fresh Buy Local" campaigns, permaculture, distribution networks, community supported ag businesses and passive solar greenhouses, there are many local speakers sharing as well.

Dr. Gerald Combs from the Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center will be the luncheon guest. He came to North Dakota from Cornell University where he served as professor of human nutrition for 29 years.

He is interested in nutrition and health issues relating to national development, obesity included, and the connection of those issues to agricultural production.

Included in the afternoon sessions are local folks talking about successes and hurdles when developing a community kitchen, community garden and selling products to grocery stores, restaurants and food services.

Kathy Stremick, Walhala, will tell of the community kitchen project in her small town.

Local attorney Kent Morrow teams up with NDSU Horticulturist Tom Kalb to talk about Bismarck's community garden now entering its third year. Joining the community garden discussion will be Linda Kingery from the Red River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local organization.

Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters are springing up across the nation in an effort to provide easy access to local foods. The chapters use a common logo and web sites to make purchasing local foods a mouse click away.

Local Foods Summit

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

8:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13

Of great interest to all producers and farmers market vendors will be Kenan Bullinger and his staff from the North Dakota Department of Health. Bullinger will be addressing food safety issues that have been asked over and over again by vendors looking to sell produce through open air markets, grocery stores and to local schools, hospitals and restaurants.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture will be working the Health Department to create an easy to understand brochure on food safety issues geared towards producers.

For producers looking to begin selling at farmers markets this summer Holly Mawby from the Minot State University - Bottineau's Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture will be speaking on "Farmers market selling savvy."

When planning a trip to Bismarck for the Local Foods Summit, be sure and stay an extra day for the classes, workshops and speakers at Marketplace for Entrepreneurs on Jan. 14, also at the Civic Center in Bismarck. Mark Zandi, chief economist for Moody's Economy.com will be the keynote speaker.

Marketplace is North Dakota's largest and longest-running economic development conference. More information on both days can be found at www.marketplaceforentrepreneurs.org. The events are free and open to the public.

Calendar of upcoming events

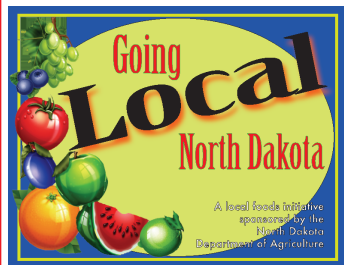
JANUARY 13 Local Foods summit held in conjunction with NDFMGA annual meeting at the Civic Center, Bismarck.

FEBRUARY 3 Local Foods meeting 6 to 9 p.m. at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, following the Grand Forks Public Schools wellness fair.

Is your community planning a local foods meeting or event?

Send your information to suebalcom@nd.gov or go to <http://goinglocalnd.ning.com/> and add your information to the calendar of events.





Local Foods Summit

and 5th Annual North Dakota
Farmers Market and Growers Association Conference

8:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Tuesday, January 13

Bismarck Civic Center– Room 105 (above the Exhibition Hall)

- 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. Registration Desk Open**
- 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Introductions**
- 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. Keynote Speaker: “Local Foods – Not Just a Fad!”**
Pat Garrity, NW Iowa regional foods coordinator; ISU Leopold Center and South Dakota local foods coordinator; and South Dakota Specialty Producers Association
- 10:00 to 10:15 a.m. Morning Break**
- 10:15 to 11:00 a.m. Keynote Speaker: Bob Waldrop, Oklahoma Food Cooperative**
- 11:00 to 11:30 p.m. Preliminary Report, ND Distribution Study for Local Foods:**
*Holly Mawby, Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture –
Minot State University, Bottineau*
- 11:30 - 12:00 p.m. Hunger in North Dakota**
Steve Sellent, Lutheran Social Services Great Plains Food Bank
- 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. Learning Lunch**
Dr. Gerald Combs, NDSU Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center
- 1:00 p.m. Choose from one of the following sessions to attend:**
- a. Regional local food systems...What works in northwest Iowa – *Pat Garrity*
 - b. Story of the Walhalla community kitchen – *Kathy Stremick*
 - c. Food safety rules and regulations for producers– *North Dakota Department of Health*
- 2:00 p.m. Choose from one of the following sessions to attend:**
- a. Sustainable food production on limited acres – *Bob Waldrop*
 - b. How to grow great produce in the dead of winter –
The Garden Goddess Greenhouse model – Carol Ford
 - c. Strategies for selling to local restaurants, grocers and retailers (*Panel Q & A*)
- 3:00 p.m. Choose from one of the following sessions to attend:**
- a. Bismarck Community Garden – *Kent Morrow and Tom Kalb*;
also the Red River Valley “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” chapter – *Linda Kingery*
 - b. Designing and building a 21st Century winter green house – *Chuck Waibel*
 - c. Farmers market selling savvy – *Holly Mawby Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture –
Minot State University, Bottineau*
- 4:00 p.m. North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association Business Meeting**
- 5:45 p.m. Marketplace for Entrepreneurs Reception – Everyone welcome!**



Local light

Buy art from artist and food from farmers...



Sue B. Balcom



A snow-covered branch surrounding by its very own snow cave, compliments of the north wind.

It has been a divine winter. Underneath the snow, I can see the soil anticipating the soon-to-be moisture from the piles and piles of frozen rain. We dug out the snowshoes for the first time in some seven or eight years. Walking along the river, we see the fierce north wind has sculpted the most wonderful snow caves along the edges; drifts defying gravity, like the eagles who nest nearby, seemingly float over the edge of the bank.

Thoughts of spring and tiny green seedlings poke through my new memories of a wonderful white winter. And, I ponder the “why” of growing your own food. Or eating food grown by the neighboring farm.

When my children were in grade school, I would take time out each winter to visit their classroom as a guest artist. We didn’t do anything phenomenal by way of art, but some small project like building clay sculptures or making paper. The

teachers loved the break from the regular routine and it gave me a chance to tell the youngsters why art is important to me.

I said, “In my kitchen I have utensils made of wood. Sure, you can get the same size and shaped spoons at any store that sells such things. However, when I use my utensils, made by Paul Shuster from Minnesota, I see him. I remember conversations with him, his face, his rough hands. It makes me smile.”

It’s a choice; to buy art from artists. We need creative people in our society, so it is a wise choice to support artists. Every time you make a purchase at a local art fair or art gallery you are contributing to the well being and livelihood of creative people.

Since this is the beginning of a new year, I’m asking each of you to think about your choices, not only art, but food.

That’s what local food is all about. It involves making choices to support local businesses, local farmers and best of all your family’s health and well being. There’s nothing more delightful than sharing a meal with someone and telling them your Aunt Luella made the pickles and your Aunt Alma made the chokecherry jelly.

Somewhere underneath the snow, the soil waits for seed and we await the spring. Already, the seed catalogs and emails offering incentives to purchase your garden have started drifting into my mailbox like the snowy banks surrounding the garden.

No, not everyone needs to plant a garden this spring. That’s what I told those students... not everyone can, or wants to, be an artist. We need both artists and people who love art enough to seek it out. That’s how it will work with local foods. We need people to grow and we need people who just love to eat fresh vegetables and home cooking.

If you are the type of person that is already penning your 2009 journal, or have seedlings struggling to reach the light, good for you. If you aren’t then consider buying a share in your local Community Supported Ag business. There’s a few around the state and hopefully more will spring up as soon as people realize there’s nothing better than finding a box of “goodies” on their doorstep every Saturday morning,

To start our Local Foods year off here are some comments about local foods, definitions and other interesting food facts to begin our journey.

(The following information has been harvested from the World Wide Web of local foods sites.)

Top reasons for eating locally produced foods



Eating local means more for the local economy

According to a study by the New Economics Foundation in London, a dollar spent locally generates twice as much income for the local economy.

When businesses are not owned locally, money leaves the community at every transaction.

Locally grown produce is fresher

While produce that is purchased in the supermarket or a big-box store has been in transit or cold-storage for days or weeks, produce you purchase at your local farmers market has often been picked within 24 hours of your purchase. This freshness not only affects the taste of your food, but the nutritional value that declines with time.

Locally grown just plain tastes better

Ever tried a tomato that was picked within 24 hours? Enough said

Locally grown fruits and vegetables have longer to ripen

Because the produce will be handled less, locally grown fruit does not have to be “rugged” or stand up to the rigors of shipping. This means that you are going to be getting peaches so ripe that they fall apart as you eat them, figs that would have been smashed to bits if they were sold using traditional methods, and melons that were allowed to ripen until the last possible minute on the vine.

Eating local is better for air quality and pollution than eating organic

A study in the 2005 Food Policy Journal found that the miles organic foods often travel to our plate create environmental damage that outweighs the benefit of buying organic.

Buying local food keeps us in touch with the seasons

By eating with the seasons, we are eating foods when they are at their peak taste, are the most abundant, and the least expensive.

Buying locally grown food makes for a wonderful story

Whether it's the farmer who brings apples to market or the baker who makes bread, knowing part of the story about your food is such a powerful part of enjoying a meal.



Local foods translate to more variety

When a farmer is producing food that will not travel a long distance, will have a shorter shelf life, and does not have high-yield demand, the farmer is free to try small crops of various fruits and vegetables that would probably never make it to a large supermarket. Supermarkets are interested in selling “name brand” fruits and vegetables: Romaine lettuce, Red Delicious Apples and Russet Potatoes. Local producers often play with their crops from year to year, trying out Little Gem Lettuce, Senshu Apples, and Chieftain Potatoes.

Supporting local providers supports responsible land development

When you buy local, you give those with local open space – farms and pastures – an economic reason to stay open and undeveloped.

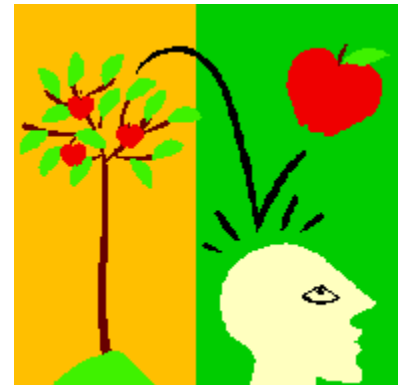
Here is an interesting bit of trivia:

Next time you are shopping at the local supermarket take a look at the produce stickers found on your purchases. There is information in that sticker you may want to know.

4 digits: This means the produce has been grown the conventional way.

5 digits: The first digit is a 9: This means the produce is organic.

5 digits: The first digit is an 8: This means the produce has been genetically modified.



Local words defined

Words these days change as quickly as the weather in North Dakota, but here are a few that may pop up in local foods conversations. These short definitions will keep you understand more about the national local foods movement.

Cage Free

Birds are raised without cages. What this doesn't explain is if the birds were raised outdoors on pasture, if they had access to outside, or if they were raised indoors in overcrowded condi-



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tions. If you are looking to buy eggs, poultry or meat that was raised outdoors, look for a label that says “pastured” or “pasture-raised.”

Certified Organic

In order to be certified, the farmer and the entire farm must meet the USDA’s

standards along with the state standards. An application is filed, an inspection is done, and if the farm passes, a fee is assessed, and certification is complete. Only certified organic produce bears a label stating thus. Certified organic labels are accessible only to those who have passed inspection and paid their yearly fee.

Organic foods cannot be grown using synthetic fertilizers, chemical, or sludge. Seeds cannot be genetically modified or irradiated. Organic meat and poultry must have been fed only organically grown feed. Furthermore animals must have access to the outdoors.

Conventional Agriculture

The style of agricultural practices that involves using chemical fertilizers, pesticides and machinery.

Free-Range/Roaming

‘Free range’ or ‘free roaming’ means that the animal had some access to the outdoors each day. However, this doesn’t guarantee that the animal spent any time outside. As long as a door to the outdoors is left open for some period of time, the animal can be considered free range. Although the USDA has defined this term for chicken raised for consumption, no standards have been set for egg-laying chicken or for other animals. If you are looking to buy eggs, poultry or meat that was raised outdoors, look for a label that says ‘pastured’ or ‘pasture-raised.’

Grass-Fed

Animals eat grasses from start to finish. They should not be supplemented with grain, animal byproducts, synthetic hormones, or be given antibiotics to promote growth or prevent disease (though they might be given antibiotics to treat disease). Note that ‘grass-fed’ does not guarantee that the animal was pastured or pasture-raised. While most grass fed animals are pasture raised, some may still be confined and fed a steady diet of grasses.

Grass-Fed, Grain Supplemented

Animals are raised on pasture and eat grasses. At a certain point, grains are slowly introduced into the diet in a controlled amount, along with the grasses. By controlling the amount of grain, the animals do not become sick and do not develop digestion problems that solely grain fed cattle can encounter. They are also not forced to eat the grain.

Heritage

Heritage foods are derived from rare and endangered breeds of livestock and crops. Animals are purebreds, a specific

breed of animal that is near extinction. Production standards are not required by law, but true heritage farmers use sustainable production methods. This method of production saves animals from extinction and preserves genetic diversity.

Hoop Houses

These are long plastic tunnels held up by wire hoops over parts of a farmer’s field. The heat from the soil keeps the ground warm enough to plant vegetables and fruits later in the season for additional months of product to sell. The hoop houses protect the plants from the harsh weather, but steps must be taken to irrigate what is being grown, and watch for signs of too much water.



Hot House

This refers to vegetables grown in a greenhouse over the months when it is impossible to grow anything outside. Hot houses are used in areas where winter months freeze the ground. Hothouse items look like conventionally grown items, they lack the necessary sunshine to produce the correct taste, but if you need a tomato in the winter, this is what you will find.

Hydroponics

Many lettuces, tomatoes and varieties of fruits and vegetables are grown in water with nutrients washing over the roots of the plants. Done predominately for vegetables that grow quickly, such as lettuce and tomatoes, cucumbers and some fruits are now being grown without soil.

Local Produce

Fresh fruits and vegetables that come from farms surrounding the city are considered local if the farm is less than 100 miles from the market.

Naturally Grown

Not a term used with local. A general term used in grocery stores, to suggest that the produce was grown without pesticides or chemicals.

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No Antibiotics Use

No antibiotics were administered to the animal during its lifetime. If an animal becomes sick, it will be taken out of the herd and treated, but it will not be sold with this label.

No Added Hormones

Animals were raised without added growth hormones. By law, hogs and poultry cannot be given any hormones - so the use of the label on these meats is misleading! To ensure that other meats were raised without added hormones, ask your farmer or butcher.

No Routine Antibiotic Use

Antibiotics were not given to the animal to promote growth or prevent disease, but may have been administered if the animal became ill.

Organic

A voluntary production system that includes fruits and vegetables as well as farm animals: this system avoids or excludes the use of synthetic and/or compounded fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feeder additions.

Pasture-Raised

In general, pasturing is a traditional farming technique where animals are raised outdoors in a humane, ecologically sustainable manner and eat foods that nature intended them to eat. Animals are raised on pasture rather than being fattened on a feedlot or in a confined facility.

Pesticide/Chemical Free Produce

Fruits and vegetables that have been raised with the use of commercially produced chemical pesticides that can leave a residue on produce, can be integrated into the plant and fruit or vegetable that consumers will eat. Many farmers may hand pick off bugs and worms, some use natural products such as red pepper, soap, vinegar, chickens and even dogs to keep all types of pests away from their crops.



Sustainable Agriculture

A farmer and his family use the natural resources available to the farm. The farmer grows and can produce a living off the land in such a way as to not deplete the resources on the farm. Farmers work with the resources; such as composting, recycling, alternative crop rotation, soil, wind and water conservation.

Wild or Foraged

Some items farmers bring to market grow wild in the fields or woods. These items can include ramps, (wild leeks) dandelion greens, morel and puffball mushrooms, fiddlehead fern heads, wild asparagus, strawberries, blueberries and a variety of nuts.

See you at the

Local Foods Summit

Registration begins at 8:30

Workshops, speakers, networking and lunch

FREE and open to the public

Don't miss this event held in conjunction with Marketplace for Entrepreneurs held on Wednesday, Jan. 14.

For more information contact Sue Balcom at the North Dakota

Department of Agriculture

701-328-4763 or email suebalcom@nd.gov

www.agdepartment.com

